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THESIS

THE STILLBORN ARMY:
POLITICAL CONTENTION AND THE FATE
OF DE GAULLE'S ARMEE DE METIER

JOHN DOUGLAS MONAHAN

1988

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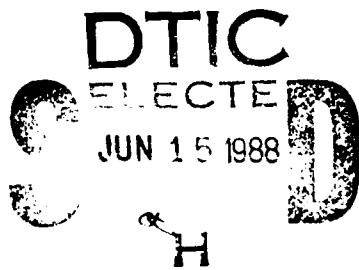
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THE STILLBORN ARMY:
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DE GAULLE'S ARMÉE DE MÉTIER

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Master of Arts

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by

John Douglas Monahan
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ABSTRACT

In 1934 then Major Charles de Gaulle published Vers l'Armée de Metier (Toward a Professional Army, translated as The Army of the Future), a book which created an uproar in the French Army and the National Assembly due to its advocacy of the creation of a "professional army." This professional army was to number approximately 100,000 long service soldier-technicians and was to be organized around six mechanized divisions. It was to employ the strategy of the indirect approach which had been put forth in the 1925 book Paris, or the Future of War by the British military historian and philosopher, Basil H. Liddell-Hart. French grand strategy at the time envisioned only a defensive war and was based on three principles; defense of the Maginot line, the maintenance of a conscript army, and the cultivation of alliances for mutual defense. Due to a lack of conformity to these three pillars of French interwar security policy, and due to the contentiousness of the political crusade which de Gaulle and Paul Reynaud directed, the proposal was rejected by both the General Staff and the National Assembly, a rejection which, it has been claimed, virtually preordained the defeat of May-June 1940.

De Gaulle's proposals were made at a time of tremendous political, social, and economic upheaval in France, and were put forth in an overblown and nationalistic style. At a time when the Army, "La Grand Muette," was reluctant to engage in overtly political acts de Gaulle and Paul Reynaud embarked on a campaign which was undisguisedly political in nature and characterized by a high degree of acrimony and invective.

The author will establish that de Gaulle, by adopting a role outside of the bounds of the behavior expected of the French Officer of the period, and by politicizing his proposals, greatly contributed to the French Army's failure to adopt his model army. The thesis will examine de Gaulle's actions in forwarding his proposals within the framework of the relations between the French state and its soldiers. It will also analyze de Gaulle's proposals, their political and strategic implications, and the reasons for their ultimate rejection. The analysis will be framed as a case study, utilizing the model of French political contention of Stanley Hoffmann contained in the 1963 work, In Search of France, and will place de Gaulle's campaign within the context of Hoffmann's interpretation of the political culture of the Third Republic.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Douglas Monahan [REDACTED] on [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He is the eldest of the five children of John and Norma Monahan. He was raised and educated in Rhode Island, graduating from Cranston High School East, and receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Rhode Island in 1975. He has been married to the former Dianne Wickes since 1976, and is the father of a daughter, Megan, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] he has been a member of the United States Army, and is currently a Captain in the 37th Armor Regiment. He has held a variety of positions in tank units in the United States, the Republic of Korea, and the Federal Republic of Germany, including Platoon Leader, Company Executive Officer, Company Commander, and Battalion Operations Officer. He is a Commandant's List graduate of the Armor Officer's Basic Course, the Infantry Officer's Advanced Course, and The Command and General Staff College. His awards include the Meritorious Service Medal (1st Oak Leaf Cluster), the Army Commendation Medal (1st OLC), and the Army Achievement Medal (1st OLC). He is also the holder of the Expert Infantryman's Badge, Ranger Tab, and Parachutist's Badge. Since February of 1986 he has been undergoing training as a Foreign Area Officer, graduating from the German Language Course of the Defense Language Institute at Monterey, California in December, 1986, and arriving at Cornell University in January, 1987 to pursue a program of instruction in Western European Studies. Upon graduation he will attend the Staff College of the Austrian Army in Vienna.

To my parents

John D. and Norma E. Monahan
with gratitude
for their
love and support

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The events of May-June 1940 leading to the capitulation of France were a profound shock not only to the French, but to the rest of the world. It was a defeat more complete and final than those of Waterloo in 1815 or Sedan in 1870.¹ France possessed an army which was reputed to be one of the best prepared in Europe, an army which had proven itself worthy of the nation's adulation during the trying period of the Great War.² It was an army which was equipped with some of the best military hardware of the age, albeit improperly employed, but which was unable to defeat a German Army both smaller numerically and possessing, contrary to popular belief, tanks which were qualitatively inferior to those fielded by the French.³ The French army of 1940 possessed rough parity with the Germans in antitank weapons

¹Anthony Adamthwaite, France and the Coming of the Second World War 1936-1939 (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1977), xii.

²Robert Allen Doughty, The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine 1919-1939 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1985), 1; Liddell-Hart states that, "France . . . had many of the ingredients of an up-to-date army, but had not organized them into such." Basil H. Liddell-Hart, History of the Second World War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 21.

³James F. McMillan, Dreyfus to de Gaulle: Politics and Society in France 1898-1969 (Baltimore: Edward Arnold, 1985), 124.

and fielded the SOMUA S-35, a tank with armor, speed, and armament superior to the principal German tank, the PzKw III.⁴

The totality of the collapse led, in the years following the war, to accusations and recriminations against those thought to be most responsible for this humiliating failure of French arms. The National Assembly conducted an investigation in 1947 which singled out Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain, General Maxime Weygand, and General Maurice Gustave Gamelin for the harshest criticism, citing both their errors of judgement and their attitude of defeatism. Paul Reynaud, Léon Blum, Edouard Daladier, and General Gamelin were also charged with having done less than their utmost to foster French preparedness and with not having pursued the aggressive actions which would have resulted in a French victory.⁵ The French had to face the fact that the German Army had thoroughly defeated them in an extremely short span of time by adopting and adapting the emerging technology of armored warfare to restore the mobility absent on the battlefield during the Great War.

In this atmosphere of charge and counter-charge a popular myth was born. It was the myth of Charles de Gaulle as the ignored prophet of the French Army, as the voice crying for change in the wilderness of inertia and

⁴Friedrich Wilhelm von Mellenthin, R. H. S. Stolfi, and E. Sobik, NATO Under Attack: Why the Western Alliance Can Fight Outnumbered and Win in Central Europe Without Nuclear Weapons (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 26-27; According to German General Heinz Guderian, principal architect of the "Blitzkrieg," it (the SOMUA) was the "best tank in the field." Guy Chapman, Why France Collapsed (London: Cassell & Co., 1968), 35.

⁵Doughty, Seeds of Disaster, 2.

stagnation which was France in the years between the two World Wars.⁶ De Gaulle is portrayed by the adherents of this popular mythology as an original thinker and consummate soldier who, but for the intransigence of the French General Staff, could have shown France the path which would have avoided the failures of 1940.

This was, of course, not the only reason that the French had lost the war, and critics also rightly pointed to the moral, economic, social, and political decay which preceded 1940 during the course of a Third Republic which was, "but a working compromise between Republican and anti-Republican forces."⁷ France had not witnessed the drastic changes in the structure of society which happened in Russia and Germany. Moreover, the victory in World War I had obscured the toll exacted by the war and seemed to have confirmed the soundness of France's political and social institutions.⁸

De Gaulle's conception of a new model army was almost entirely out of synchronization with the grand strategy adopted by the postwar civilian leadership of France, and therefore unlikely to have been adopted even in the absence of what eventually became a contentious campaign in its behalf. Nevertheless, de Gaulle emerged from the war, because of his early

⁶Herbert Luethy, France Against Herself: A Perceptive Study of France's Past, Her Politics, and Her Unending Crises, trans. Eric Mosbacher (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), 95.

⁷David Thomson, Democracy in France: The Third and Fourth Republics, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 170.

⁸David B. Ralston, ed., Soldiers and States: Civil-Military Relations in Modern Europe (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1966), 154.

advocacy of tank warfare, and because of his "mutiny" and subsequent leadership of the Free French forces in exile, as a hero of great stature.

To the extent that his reputation rested on his advocacy of tank warfare, it was, indeed, at least partially a myth. De Gaulle's 1934 book Vers l'Armée de Métier (Toward a Professional Army, translated as The Army of the Future), while quite a forward-thinking document for a French officer to have written at the time, owed a great deal to the writings of the British military writer Basil H. Liddell-Hart. In it de Gaulle called for the creation of an army of 100,000 long service soldier-technicians who would man a force of six armored divisions equipped and trained along the lines of the force envisioned by Liddell-Hart in his 1925 book, Paris, or the Future of War. Like Liddell-Hart, he hoped to utilize the hitting power, protection, and mobility the tank offered to restore maneuver to the battlefield, and thus to revive the art of generalship. He hoped to forge a weapon capable of a march of a hundred miles a day, and able to strike at the nerve centers of the opposing army, its command and communication centers. The aim of such a force was not to wear down the enemy in battles of attrition such as those witnessed on the western front, but to demoralize the enemy and obviate the need to strike at his "flesh and blood."⁹

It was a document meant to appeal to the French not only as military philosophy but as patriotic literature as well. It spoke of the historical enmity between the Germans and the French, the limitations imposed on France by her geography, and of the traditional dependence of the French on the mass

⁹Basil H. Liddell-Hart, Paris, or the Future of War (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1925), 62-77.

armies of reserves called up to defend the nation in time of need. It was as much a political pamphlet as the outline of a new manner of strategic thought.

De Gaulle's thesis was rejected not only by the military, led by General Weygand, but by the politicians who eventually became involved in the arguments. De Gaulle's concepts became the subject of intense public debate because of the advocacy of his policies by a sympathetic politician whom de Gaulle sought out for that purpose, Paul Reynaud, a representative of the center-right and former finance minister who was to later lead France's government in the Spring of 1940. Though attractive to Reynaud, de Gaulle's army sounded, to leftists such as Léon Blum and Edouard Daladier, much more like an army a nation would maintain to keep militant workers in line than an army oriented toward dealing with a potential external threat.¹⁰

In advancing his proposal for a professional army at a time when French grand strategy was based on the threefold foundation of a conscript army, a fortified frontier, and the development of elaborate alliances, de Gaulle was certainly swimming against the tide. The proposals were bound to provoke heated discussion, particularly those calling for an army manned by long service professionals in contradiction to the traditional French concept of the nation-in-arms.

The campaign became a political issue once de Gaulle enlisted the help of Paul Reynaud and several prominent journalists, and is, I believe, an example of the type of political contention which had characterized political

¹⁰Alistair Horne, The French Army in Politics, 1870-1970 (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1984), 3.

interaction in France during the Third Republic. Much of the debate has centered on the military aspects of the proposals and their failure of adoption, largely to the exclusion of the strictly political aspects of the campaign. This political dimension is that which I seek to illuminate.

The political culture of France has been the subject of much work and debate, and has generated several theories on its principal characteristics and workings. Prominent among these works are those of Stanley Hoffmann and Michel Crozier, who have analyzed French political interaction and power relationships and formulated their model of the operation of the "stalemate society." It is this model which I will use to analyze de Gaulle's program, treating it as an essentially political program, not unlike many others, whose eventual outcome could have been anticipated if the Hoffmann-Crozier model is accurate.

The model is not without detractors and limitations, and these will be addressed in an attempt to judge the model's utility. I do not presume that it is, indeed, accurate, and one of the questions to be answered herein is to what degree the model is a helpful tool with which to analyze French political interaction.

Any discussion of the French rejection of the concept of armored warfare must also address how other nations, particularly Germany and Britain, adapted and adopted equipment, force structure, and doctrine to accommodate emerging technology in the 1930s. Recognizing that each country faced a hugely different political, economic, and strategic situation, I will, nevertheless, explore the acceptance of emerging technologies and their associated military doctrine. I will focus on the political integration, or

lack thereof, in the pursuance of military programs, RADAR in Britain, and armored warfare in Germany, and the degree to which civilian-military cooperation was a factor in the success of the programs. I will show in this way that the course of events in France might have had different results had other political circumstances prevailed.

The rejection of the proposals contained in Vers l'Armée de Métier was, in my opinion, as much due to the nature of the shrill and contentious campaign conducted by de Gaulle and Reynaud as it was to the opposition to it in the military and political sphere. Logically there was no reason, for example, why a small, technically proficient army such as that envisioned by de Gaulle, could not have co-existed with a larger territorial army of fortress troops and reservists, although this would have run counter to the prevailing notions in both civilian and military spheres regarding appropriate grand strategy.

Several books have discussed French security policy in the 1930s in detail, notably Robert Allen Doughty, who focuses on military doctrine in The Seeds of Disaster, Barry R. Posen, who explains French grand strategy in The Sources of Military Doctrine, and Jeffrey Johnstone Clarke, who concentrates on military technology in Military Technology in Republican France. Each uses a different approach in explaining why de Gaulle's program had so little appeal. Each is, however, limited in the degree to which it discusses the program of mechanization and professionalization as a strictly political equation, subject to many of the rules which are imposed on any such political program by the nature of the political culture and the actors involved. I will not refute their explanations, but emphasize instead the role

which the nature of the campaign itself and the actions of the principal protagonists had in causing its defeat, and the paradoxical nature of the crusade in terms of the French army's self-avowed role in the politics of the period.

The questions to be answered are these: as a political program, can de Gaulle's campaign be explained in terms of the Hoffmann-Crozier model, is the model a valid analytical tool, in what way was this program, the integration of emerging technology, and its reception peculiarly French, and to what extent, if any, was de Gaulle's conduct inconsistent with his role as a serving French officer.

I hope by answering these questions to increase understanding of the political aspects this important episode in interwar history, and of the early political career of Charles de Gaulle.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICS OF CONTENTION

Models of political interaction are, like all analytical models, tools which can be used to both identify recurring political themes or phenomena or to compare and contrast political systems. They can, if reasonably accurate, provide a convenient and illuminating device with which to fit historical events into recurring identifiable patterns of political behavior. Models have, however, limitations which mandate the exercise of a degree of caution in their application. First, one cannot reasonably expect that all the historical circumstances of a particular event or sequence of events will fit into a particular "template." There will always be some degree of variation from the model, and one should therefore, look for a *degree* of conformity to a given model and should also point out discrepancies in its application to the historical circumstances. Second, one must recognize that models seek to organize certain facts, behavior and circumstances which the author of the model deems relevant to the explanation of political interaction. The danger in accepting a given model is that one then accepts as given that such facts or circumstances are the determinants of the political behavior. This may omit the consideration of other relevant inputs into political behavior. Third, models of political interaction fit historical circumstances into certain categories of political behavior which may be somewhat arbitrary in nature.

The researcher may also, with deliberate forethought but some degree of arbitrariness, fit certain events into certain categories of behavior.

Such is the case with this work. For clarity I have sought to make a distinction between the conduct of the campaign for mechanization into two arenas of contention-the political forum and the military sphere. This distinction categorizes interaction as having occurred in one or the other of these forums for the sake of illustrating the distinction between actions which one could have reasonably expected to occur in the course of the discussion of a purely military matter versus that which one would expect in the discussion of a purely political program. It is not an arbitrary distinction, but actions which I have categorized as having occurred in one sphere might also legitimately fall into the other category. This is, in fact, a part of the problem I seek to address, in that my argument is that much of what should have been a military matter became a contentious political issue.

One of the most prominent theories of political interaction in France has been forwarded by Stanley Hoffmann in his essay on the political community in In Search of France.¹ It is known as the "domination-crisis" model of state-group relations, and is also closely associated with the writings of Michel Crozier. Their views of French politics are grounded in their analysis of attitudes towards authority and change. Hoffmann considers the Third Republic and its political machinery to have been peculiarly well adapted to the society, political system, and world outlook of France during

¹Stanley Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," in In Search of France, ed. Stanley Hoffmann et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 1-117.

the period,² and he refers to the compatibility between these factors as the "Republican Synthesis," meant to serve the needs of a "peculiarly complex society."³

The "stalemate society" of his model had three principal features; a mix of socio-economic systems, a distinctly French style of authority, and poor associational life. This society represented an equilibrium among the centrifugal forces in French society and politics. Hoffmann emphasizes the degree to which groups tend to defend the status-quo, the proclivity of the French to resort to impersonal, formalized and hierarchical rules imposed from above, and the weakness of associational life which results in groups which are fragmented, divided, and refuse to recognize that interdependence can be of value. It was a political culture marked by fear, suspicion, resistance, and an inability to compromise. Groups ferociously defended their interests and resisted any change which they perceived as prejudicial to those interests.⁴

Hoffmann posits a society which possessed a unique socio-economic system which did not conform to either the "static" or the "dynamic" models of such systems. The first model discussed is the "Feudal-Agrarian" model, characterized by a limited degree of division of labor, with the family or corporation as the basic group, little role specialization, societal

²Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 2.

³Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 3.

⁴Vincent Wright, The Government and Politics of France, 2d ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1983), 222-225.

segmentation, and a social hierarchy based on status, deference, and tradition. Hoffmann contrasts this with the the model of the "Industrial Society," which is a system that he regards as engendering the virtues of dynamism and social mobility. Such a system is characterized by an extensive division of labor, a high degree of role specialization, extensive communications which unify markets and hasten social mobilization, groups which are more specialized, and a social hierarchy which is organized more functionally.

France, according to Hoffmann, conforms to neither model, but represents a unique socio-economic system which is neither wholly static nor dynamic, but which seeks to maintain equilibrium. Hoffmann traces this deviation to the fact that the bourgeoisie of modern France adopted the old order values which led them to shun strict economic rationality. Motivation within the business community is based to a large degree on social considerations, with social predominance and family continuity as the goal rather than the efficient production of the greatest amount of goods.⁵ Social mobility within this system is accepted, but is not considered as necessarily beneficial. The maintenance of the equilibrium which Hoffmann sees as fundamental to this system is predicated on a belief that social mobility and industrialization should proceed in a limited and well defined manner.

Of particular importance to the discussion of de Gaulle's campaign are the dynamics of power relations; the way in which authority is exercised, and the dynamics of associational life.

⁵Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 4.

Hoffmann's views about the nature of authority relationships in France are basic to his conception of the "stalemate society." He describes the Third Republic as incorporating a "noninterventionist" style of authority. This type of relationship is characterized by the "coexistence of limited authoritarianism and potential insurrection."⁶ His model is that of a society which "stresses the function of resistance rather than the common positive tasks."⁷

Again, Hoffmann argues that two basic models exist, neither of which adequately explain the France of the Third Republic. The "Liberal Society" which he describes emphasizes the virtues of initiative, cooperation, and dialogue. Open discussion of the issues is encouraged and the benefits of compromise are emphasized. Such a society is characterized by egalitarianism, the disdain of ranks and castes, a great degree of intellectual homogeneity, and a generally pragmatic approach to conflict resolution. The authoritarian style, as described by Hoffmann, is characterized, on the other hand, by conflict resolution which is not consensus oriented, but subjective, with decisionmaking by fiat common. The authoritarian society exhibits a large amount of repression of conflict.

The French style of authority is neither of these, but a hybrid which Hoffmann terms the "noninterventionist," wherein liberal and authoritarian styles coexist. Limited authoritarianism and potential insurrection against the system are both typical. The hallmarks are an extreme distaste for face-to-face discussions leading to compromises through the participation of all

⁶Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 8.

⁷Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 11.

parties, and conflict resolution by reference to higher authority.⁸ The power of the central authority in this system is carefully limited and the exercise of such power is often delegated to achieve the maximum level of avoidance of face-to-face interaction. This system, allowing the alternation between authoritarianism and insurrection, is held by Hoffmann to embody both the hierarchical and the revolutionary features of French society as he views it.

Peculiarities which Hoffmann perceives in associational life in France also play a large role in the nature of political interaction. The high degree of individualism characteristic of French society is held by Hoffmann to be the corollary of the high degree of fragmentation which is also present. This atomism results, according to Hoffmann, in a political culture which embodies a strong distrust of the state, a sincere desire to be left alone, and a lack of associational activities which are based on mutual trust. The political culture is marked by polarization and conflict, with the proclivity of the participants being to defend themselves against something rather than to work together for something.

The society described by Hoffmann is a system which protects the independence of the participants from responsibility for outcomes of decision making and allows the retention of the right to protest more effectively. It is a system which does not seek to overcome the divisions between the groups, but to achieve a negative consensus against authoritarianism. It seeks

⁸Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 8-9.

solutions which are the least divisive and stresses the function of resistance over the common positive tasks.⁹

The French administrative style which functions in support of the political system described by Hoffmann reduces the level of participation and enthusiasm for innovation. Within such a system the only kind of innovation which is likely is that which is forced from above in the hierarchy, and can therefore be disavowed by the lower strata if unsuccessful.¹⁰

Michel Crozier's argument parallels Hoffmann's and states that associational life is weak, dominated by individualism, stratification, and isolation. It is the natural corollary to the fragmentation of French society which France's diversity has accentuated.¹¹ Crozier's critical contribution to the model is the notion of the "functional crisis" as the means through which change can be effected in the political system, and it is my contention that the events of 1940, though not the object of this study, form the crisis which results in the reformation of the French army hierarchy.

The Hoffmann model, while quite prominent, has been criticized as not fully explaining the complex nature of political interaction in France. Vincent Wright is particularly critical of the failure of the model to address the number and frequency of the changes which have been brought about in France without any appreciable degree of confrontation and crisis. He also

⁹Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 11.

¹⁰Michel Crozier, The Stalled Society (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 86-93.

¹¹Michel Crozier, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), 214-220.

contends that the model underestimates or overlooks the degree to which certain groups habitually compromise, certain portions of the bureaucracy regularly prove sensitive to the demands of certain groups, and the degree of dynamism and innovative thinking which occurs in some groups.¹² These criticisms of the model, while perhaps valid, do not have substantial relevance to the topic at hand, as it is my stated intention to discuss a set of events in which conflict among the competing interests was central to the eventual course of events.

Hoffmann's model has also been criticized on several counts by Sidney Tarrow and Fred Greenstein. They reject Hoffmann's notion of France as a "paradox" and the idea that France's supposed uniqueness requires the use of analytical modes adapted to this circumstance. The concept of a "French" model is one which they find less than useful, owing to the fact that comparisons are difficult in the face of experiences which are held to be unique. Tarrow and Greenstein also reject two of Hoffmann's other notions, namely; the idea that the depth of ideological conflict in France is as great as Hoffmann would have us believe and that it is the result of "ideological socialization" which is pervasive in French society, and the notion that the French attitudes toward political authority are uniquely French and the result of certain traits of the "national character."¹³ I hope to illustrate that, at least in the case of the series of events under consideration, the depth

12Wright, Government and Politics of France, 224-225.

13Fred I. Greenstein and Sidney G. Tarrow, "The Study of French Political Socialization: Toward the Revocation of Paradox," World Politics 22 (October 1969): 96-101.

of the ideological conflict was substantial. As regards Greenstein and Tarrow's analysis of Hoffmann's model with respect to its utility in making comparisons across systems or countries, I believe they are absolutely correct in viewing "unique" models as less than useful for this purpose. I seek, however, to analyze the campaign for the professional army as an instance of political interaction within the model of such action in the Third Republic, and do not hold that such an analysis could successfully be transposed to another political culture or system.

François Goguel, in his critique of Hoffmann's article in In Search of France finds the analysis to be "remarkably accurate" in its description of the "republican synthesis," wherein the state seeks to maintain the status quo by transforming political conflict into a sort of game in which the participants played by narrowly defined rules unrelated to the necessity for the state to establish control over certain societal functions, in this case the function of proper oversight of the army for the purpose of ensuring that it provided for a defense in consonance with governmental policies.¹⁴

One must recognize then, that the model may have certain limitations which reduce its utility in completely explaining the nature of political interaction in France, but many of the tenets of Hoffmann's model have, nevertheless, relevance to the discussion of de Gaulle's proposals. The political system in which de Gaulle and his allies operated, as described by Hoffmann and Crozier, determined both the nature of the interaction of the

¹⁴François Goguel, "Six Authors in Search of a National Character," in In Search of France, ed. Stanley Hoffmann et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 359-405.

actors in the drama, and, to a large extent, the outcome of the debate. It was a system which was "bound to antagonize people who celebrated the values of activism and violence and who resented the atmosphere of verbalism and stagnation" which was embodied in the "parliamentary game with its endless debates, painful compromises, loose and heterogeneous parties, and frequent crises."¹⁵ Such a person was Major de Gaulle, a person who "abhorred the hearty team play of democratic republicanism."¹⁶

¹⁵Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," 18.

¹⁶David Schoenbrun, The Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle, (New York: Atheneum Press, 1966), 49.

CHAPTER THREE

FRENCH SECURITY POLICY BETWEEN THE WARS

France in 1919 was a study in the contrasts between appearance and reality. She was victorious, the campaigns leading to victory had been conducted under French leadership. The French people had willingly contributed, and had sacrificed more than any government could have demanded. The appearance was deceiving, and France had, in fact been seriously drained by the war. 1919 was to prove in the test to have been the zenith of French power and influence, the year which marked the first steps down the slope to the disaster of 1940.¹

The broad outlines of French security policy between the World wars were aimed at insuring that the security arrangements and balance of power which obtained after World War I, as embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, would remain substantially intact. Policy was aimed at keeping Germany, the main threat to France, in the subordinate position of power and influence in which she found herself in 1918. In order to accomplish this France relied

¹D. W. Brogan, The French Nation from Napoleon to Pétain 1814-1940 (London: Hamilton Hamish, 1957), 245-246.

heavily on the role of her army as the key element of her military strategy.² France insisted on the maintenance of strong armed forces in order to enforce the new order against Germany, a position which attracted considerable disapproval in the international community, more so, in fact, than in France itself.³

The military strategy⁴ adopted in support of the nation's grand strategy,⁵ based on the perceived lessons of World War I, was essentially defensive in nature. It depended on the use of the mass conscript army, supplemented by mobilized reserves, commonly referred to as the "nation-in-arms," and on defensive deployments behind fortifications and other fixed defenses. The corollary of these tenets of military strategy in French grand strategy was the cultivation of an elaborate system of alliances, in particular with Great Britain, Belgium, and several Eastern European countries. It was

²Barry Ross Posen, The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 105.

³Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France between Two Wars: Conflicting Strategies of Peace Since Versailles (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1940), 70-71.

⁴Military strategy employs the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by applying force or the threat of force. Military strategy sets the fundamental conditions for operations. United States Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5: Operations (Washington: Department of the Army, 1982), 2-3.

⁵The art and science of developing and using political, economic, psychological, and military forces as necessary during peace and war, to afford the maximum support to policies, in order to increase the probabilities and the favorable consequences of victory and to lessen the chances of defeat. United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1964), 135.

a grand strategy which aimed not to achieve victory over a potential enemy, but to avoid defeat.

The experience of France in the First World War was the single greatest influence on strategic and military doctrine in the interwar years. The lethality of the modern battlefield, arrayed with machine guns, artillery of all sizes, poison gases, and armored combat vehicles, made it an extremely hostile place. The prewar emphasis on the offensive and on the "moral" aspects of warfare, on the so-called "*élan*" of the fighting unit, were overtaken by the events of 1914-1918.

Both civilians and soldiers agreed that the nature of land combat had changed fundamentally, and that the war had strikingly demonstrated the decisiveness of modern firepower. "*Le feu tue*" (firepower kills) became the watchwords of many of the most prominent soldiers who had survived the war, and these words became particularly closely associated with the views of Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain, hero of Verdun and spiritual leader of the postwar French Army.⁶

It was also evident that the effective employment of such lethal firepower was likely to produce the stalemated war of attrition, so costly in manpower and matériel, which had developed during the early years of the war.⁷ The firepower technology of the war had taught that battles in the open were risky and costly, that collateral damage was great, and that victory

⁶Judith M. Hughes, To the Maginot Line: The Politics of French Military Preparation in the 1920's (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 68-72.

⁷Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 106-107.

required not spiritual, but quantitative superiority.⁸ Attitudes regarding the tank were consistent with this philosophy, with the antitank gun being to the tank what the machine gun had been to the infantryman in the war.⁹ French military leaders assumed that if war were to occur again in Europe that it would be attritional in nature.¹⁰ The premise that the employment of modern firepower inevitably resulted in a war of attrition had as its corollary that material superiority was the key to victory. Since France could not foresee circumstances in which she was likely to gain material superiority over the Germans, it was logical for them to conclude that the appropriate strategy was defensive. The defensive had certain advantages over the offensive, strictly in terms of expenditure of material, since an imbalance existed between the two types of warfare. The defender generally expended much less in matériel and manpower relative to the attacker, so the offensive was, the French believed, the costlier mode of combat.¹¹

Having drawn as the principal lesson of the war that firepower, not maneuver and bravado, now dominated the battlefield, Marshal Pétain, with the support of political leaders, proceeded to plan and implement programs

⁸Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine,115.

⁹Guy Chapman, Why France Collapsed (London: Cassell & Co.,1968), 38.

¹⁰Brian Bond, and Martin Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle: The Doctrines of Limited Liability and Mobile Defense," in Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 598.

¹¹John J. Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 71.

for security based on defensive warfare conducted from behind fortified positions.¹² It was a concept which was dearer to the politicians than it was to the military.¹³ It was also an ironic change of heart, in that French generals, such as Foch, had been the supreme exponents of the offensive and had been the first allied military leaders to utilize tanks in massed formations.¹⁴

The system which was instituted to carry out the defensive doctrine, and which became the symbol of it, was the series of fortifications along the eastern frontier from Switzerland to Luxembourg known as the Maginot Line. It was a system of fixed defenses which was attributed to the thinking of the War Minister, and former sergeant, André Maginot.¹⁵ It was thought that any attempt at invasion must fail against the Maginot Line. A prominent French officer, General Chauvineau, wrote a book entitled, Is an Invasion Still Possible?, which not only defended the fixed fortifications, but was very hostile to the organization of armored divisions.¹⁶

12Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 107.

13Alfred Vagts, A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1959), 420.

14Horne, French Army in Politics, 49.

15Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 604-605.

16Dorothy Shipley White, Seeds of Discord: De Gaulle, Free France and the Allies (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964), 21; Pétain had written in the preface to Chauvineau's book that, "A continuous front is all-sufficient, and all thought of offense is to be carefully nursed until the circumstances should be exactly right for it." Adolphe Goutard, The Battle of France, 1940, trans. A. R. P. Burgess (London: Frederick Muller, 1958), 19.

The credo of the Maginot line was based on three articles of faith; that men in fortifications could hold out against an offensive, even at odds of three to one, that ground gained by an attack would be limited, and that the Maginot Line itself represented an advance in field fortifications which precluded even minor breakthroughs.¹⁷ The Line was characteristic of the highly academic art of warfare, in which the enemy is induced to fight on carefully prepared ground of the defenders choosing. It was a "spider and fly" conception.¹⁸ However, the Line ended at Montmédy, and provided no protection from the Meuse to the Pas-de-Calais.¹⁹

It was a system which conformed to the political necessities of the period, as the French saw them, as it was unquestionably defensive in nature, and therefore not a contentious political issue in a period marked by a turning away from things military, not only in France, but in the international community as well. Its completion was geared to the year 1935, the beginning of the so-called "lean years" (années creuses), when the intake of recruits would be lowest due to the low wartime birthrate.²⁰ There was so much talk of the Line that it became a sort of national myth. The French were

17 Pertinax [André Géroud], The Gravediggers of France: Gamelin, Daladier, Reynaud, Pétain, and Laval (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1944), 11-13.

18 Thomson, Two Frenchmen, 130.

19 Pertinax, Gravediggers of France, 14.

20 John Williams, The Ides of May: The Defeat of France, May-June 1940 (London: Constable & Co., 1968), 61.

entirely convinced that the Line was impregnable.²¹ Among the justifications for its construction were the tradition of the great French military engineer, Vauban, the symbolism of the forts at Verdun, and the knowledge that the Rhineland could not be occupied indefinitely. It was, indeed, a great feat of military engineering, and was thought to provide a barrier from which defenders could rain fire down on attackers, stopping their movement.²²

Several military thinkers had concluded that the mass armies, who had fought and died in horrendous numbers on the battlefields of the Great war were likely to be replaced in the future by smaller, professional armies which relied on technology, the offensive, and well-disciplined professional soldiers. Among these thinkers were J. F. C. Fuller, Basil H. Liddell-Hart and Charles de Gaulle, all of whom argued that mass armies had been made obsolete by the necessity of training soldiers to operate the increasingly complex weaponry which was likely to dominate the future battlefield.²³ Major de Gaulle had concluded in, Vers L'Armée de Métier, his 1934 treatise, that the techniques of handling complex modern machinery could not be taught to conscripts in a couple of years.²⁴

²¹White, Seeds of Discord, 20.

²²Richard D. Challener, The French Theory of the Nation in Arms 1866-1939 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 220-221.

²³Eliot A. Cohen, Citizens and Soldiers: The Dilemmas of Military Service (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 60-63.

²⁴Alden Hatch, The de Gaulle Nobody Knows: An Intimate Biography of Charles de Gaulle (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1960), 67.

For a variety of reasons, to be discussed below, such arguments were rejected, and the Parliament reduced the length of service to eighteen months in 1923, followed by a reduction to twelve months in 1928. The reduction of service to one year had institutionalized the principle of the moderate left that the army was a type of training school and that the real strength of the nation was embodied in its reserve of citizen-soldiers.²⁵ With contingents of recruits being called up each April and October, the French army was left with units that were "no more than perpetual skeleton outfits."²⁶

Prevailing notions held that conscripts would form the basis of the army of the future, as indeed they had during the Great war. This was seen as an affirmation of the policies of the war, which had, after all, resulted in victory. The citizen-soldier would be the individual manifestation of the mobilized France, with the entire resources of the nation poised to support him in any future conflict.²⁷ Since it contained the best and most vigorous of elements of the nation, the French army was considered not only

25Challener, Nation in Arms, 213.

26Pertinax, Gravediggers of France, 18.

27Jeffrey Johnstone Clarke, "Military Technology in Republican France: The Evolution of the French Armored Force, 1917-1940" (Ph. D. diss., Duke University, 1969), 42-43.

the material, but the moral armament of the nation.²⁸ The concept of the nation in arms became a theoretical justification of defensive warfare.²⁹

The climax of the immediate postwar period was the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. German failure to pay scheduled war reparations caused Premier Raymond Poincaré to order the French Army of the Rhine to seize the Ruhr basin. The occupation was followed by resistance, recriminations from allies, and an economic crisis. France withdrew the troops in September of that year, and the army settled thereafter into the relative comfort of garrison life.³⁰

The decade of the 1920s ended with the ascendancy of Marshal Pétain and General Debénay, officers who suppressed the exercise of the tactical initiative in favor of strict and centralized tactical control.³¹

According to Dorothy Shipley White:

The Staff could see some uses for tanks. Integrated with the infantry in small groups, they would assist foot soldiers whenever possible and bar the road to enemy advance when necessary. They could reinforce infantry but could not be allowed to replace it. Since the "tank is a slave" and can only obey, it must be subordinated to the infantry command. Heavy armor was

²⁸Philip C. F. Bankwitz, "Maxime Weygand and the Army-Nation Concept in the Modern French Army," in Contemporary France: Illusion, Conflict and Regeneration, ed. John C. Cairns (New York: Franklin Watts, 1978), 170.

²⁹Challener, Nation in Arms, 218; Bankwitz, "Maxime Weygand and the Army-Nation Concept," 169-171.

³⁰Jeffery A. Gunsburg, Divided and Conquered: The French High Command and the Defeat of the West, 1940 (London: Greenwood Press, 1979), 10-11.

³¹Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 604.

necessary but tanks did not need great speed or a wide traveling radius. Radios need only receive up to a distance of fifteen kilometer, and sending apparatus was not important so no sets would be provided. Since the tanks would always be near the infantry, they would not require large numbers of refueling cars. As they were not to attack enemy units in force, they would not need heavy guns to pierce the armor of German tanks. . . . tanks would be used as an auxiliary force, but would never be assembled in one powerful arm like "a great battering ram," to seize territory or destroy an opposing army.³²

France had been in the forefront of the development of an armored force during the course of the First World War, and had, at the end of the war more than three thousand tanks of various designs.³³ General Jean-Baptiste Estienne, known as the "Father of Tanks" (Père des Chars), remained in charge of the tank forces in the first years after the war. He was an artilleryman by training, but had been responsible for convincing Generals Joffre and Nivelle of the value of the untested weapons during the war. The results of their first employment at Chemin des Dames in 1917 were disappointing, but Estienne lost none of his enthusiasm for the weapon.³⁴ He was an advocate of the tank as an effective offensive and counteroffensive weapon, and preached the doctrine of tactical and strategic mobility which he believed the tank could restore.³⁵ After the hopeful start in

32White, Seeds of Discord, 22.

33Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 603.

34Clarke, "Military Technology in Republican France," 25. Nivelle had, contrary to Estienne's advice, committed the tanks without accompanying infantry support.

35Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 603; William L. Shirer, The Collapse of the Third Republic (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), 175.

the years just after the war, Estienne, his doctrines, and his disciples fell from favor, victims of stultification, lack of experimentation, budget reductions, and political optimism. The Tank Corps was disbanded in 1920, replaced by the Tank Section of the Infantry Department, and Estienne was relegated to the Tank Inspectorate, where he was left with little to do but "inspect."³⁶

Estienne's fall from favor is important as a precursor to the campaign by de Gaulle for the formation of a separate armored corps, as Estienne had advocated much the same at an earlier date. The wartime Tank Corps had operated as a strategic element under the direct orders of the High Command. This command relationship is critical, since with the end of the war also came the end of the High Command, leaving the Tank Corps more or less as an orphan. Estienne hoped to form an independent tank arm, but was thwarted by the combined forces of the Cavalry and Infantry departments. During the decade of the 1920s the struggle for recognition was conducted by Estienne in the military journals, without success. Estienne was forced to resign for reason of age in 1927 since he had not been promoted to Corps General, having failed to achieve his goal. He continued, however, to advance his views on armored warfare until his death in 1934.³⁷

The tank was viewed in the contemporary political climate as an aggressive, offensive weapon, unsuitable to the politically appropriate

³⁶Clarke, "Military Technology in Republican France," 37.

³⁷Clarke, "Military Technology in Republican France," 55-60.

strategy of defense.³⁸ It was also the opinion of the General Staff that autonomous tank forces could not break through infantry and artillery, as Estienne held. Estienne, and later the adherents of his philosophies were judged to be the victims of an aberration.³⁹ The tank gradually began to lose its potential as a breakthrough weapon for the French army as early as the 1920s, as it began to subjugated to the tactics and pace of the infantry.⁴⁰ The tank had been designated as an offensive weapon, denied to the Germans by the Treaty of Versailles, and its possession did not seem consistent with the pacific views then prevalent in France.⁴¹ Its posession and utilization was also was seen as contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Locarno.⁴²

The period of the early 1930s was dominated by General Maxime Weygand, General Maurice Gamelin, and indeed, by Charles de Gaulle. These officers vied with one another to gain supremacy in the fight over doctrine, tactics, force structure, and equipment within the French army. Each had his own conception of the form which modernization and mechanization should take, but each of them was committed to the effort to modernize the army, although they differed as to the form this should take.

³⁸Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 603-604.

³⁹Shirer, Collapse of the Third Republic, 176.

⁴⁰Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 131.

⁴¹Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 30.

⁴²Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 38.

All, however, were convinced that the technology of mechanical weapons should be put to the most effective use.⁴³

The nadir of the French army was reached in 1936, when the officer corps was cut by eighteen hundred and fewer than two hundred thousand citizens were called up to serve.⁴⁴

Tank divisions were eventually formed in the late 1930s and tanks were produced in substantial numbers, but it was a case of too little too late. The organizations were not provided with the necessary combat support elements, such as artillery, mobile infantry, and engineer equipment. The tanks themselves, having been designed with their infantry support role in mind, had fuel tanks which carried fuel sufficient for only several hours, reducing their radius of action, and had woefully inadequate radio gear.⁴⁵

The French also attempted through diplomatic means to enhance their security by concluding alliances with Belgium, Poland, and the "Little Entente" of Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia. France's resources were not, however, sufficient to support these eastern allies in the absence of British assistance, assistance which the British were not at all willing to provide.⁴⁶ It was implicit in the conclusion of such alliances that France

⁴³Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 606-607.

⁴⁴Samuel M. Osgood, The Fall of France, 1940: Causes and Responsibilities, 2d ed. (Lexington: D. C. Heath & Co., 1972), 133.

⁴⁵Pertinax, Gravediggers of France, 26-27.

⁴⁶Gordon A. Craig, and Alexander L. George, Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 55; Brogan, French Nation, 256.

should retain the capability of rendering effective assistance to these eastern allies should they be threatened. This would have logically required a military capability which could not be exercised by remaining behind the Maginot Line. France was, however, unwilling to adopt the more offensive doctrine which would have been compatible with her commitments. France, conceiving herself a peaceful and civilized nation, entertained no thoughts of attacking another country, and therefore had no need of offensive arms.⁴⁷ French politicians and soldiers alike felt that the task of winning the British support thought to be critical to French security could only be made more difficult by the adoption of offensive capabilities.⁴⁸ Unwilling as they were to admit it, French strategists, contemplating a strictly defensive war, relied on the British navy and the British Empire to enforce the blockade which would be necessary to defeat Germany.⁴⁹ They hoped to have the British fight side by side with them in any war with Germany, and hoped that the Eastern allies would at least present the Germans with the potential problem of fighting a two front war.⁵⁰

The political and military circumstances on which French military doctrine had been formulated in the late 1920s and early 1930s changed dramatically in the mid to late 1930s, but this generated surprisingly little

⁴⁷ Shirer, Collapse of the Third Republic, 186.

⁴⁸ Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 130; Osgood, Fall of France, 138-139.

⁴⁹ McMillan, Dreyfus to de Gaulle, 117.

⁵⁰ Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence, 74-75.

change in French strategy or military doctrine.⁵¹ The threat of a rearmed Germany did not motivate the reassessment of the strategic and political goals of the French because they were extremely interested in transferring the costs of their defense, particularly to Great Britain, on whom the French relied to come to their defense. This "buck-passing" was based on the notion that France could not prevail against Germany, who outstripped her in manpower and economic power, by herself, and was also politically expedient, since more or less willing allies were to be had.⁵² The serious nature of the economic situation in France in the 1930s, and the resultant political crises, was also one of the main reasons for the retardation of French military achievement.⁵³

Once the nature of the threat became more evident and once France started to emerge from the economic crisis of the early 1930s, an increase in defense expenditures was initiated in an effort to make up for some of the lost ground. It was an effort which, if properly coordinated, could have resulted in France fielding an army in 1940 which was capable of her defense. It was not properly administered, and France proved ill prepared. Moreover, the opportunity for avoiding the war entirely may have been presented earlier, in 1936, when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland. Up until March of 1936 the Rhineland had constituted an open door through which France could come

⁵¹Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 122.

⁵²Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 122-123.

⁵³Challener, Nation in Arms, 218-219.

to the aid of her allies.⁵⁴ Hitler was ready to back down if challenged, but the French had neither the stomach nor the ability to thwart him.⁵⁵ It was a case of mobilization or nothing, since the army had not the instrument with which to strike a swift riposte.⁵⁶

The origins of the failure of French arms in 1940 are, without question, rooted in the chronic weaknesses of the social, political, and economic structure, but must still be explained in essentially military terms by France's failure to adopt a strategy and military capable of twentieth century warfare.⁵⁷

Richard Challener summed it up best, saying:

Thus the decade of the thirties - when military theories became stagnant and a divided nation became lost in introspection and party warfare - did not provide an atmosphere conducive to the development of dynamic concepts of the nation in arms. Hence the theory of *la nation armée* proclaimed the legitimacy of but one type of warfare: the defensive.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Adamthwaite, France and the Coming of the Second World War, xi.

⁵⁵ J. R. Tournoux, Pétain and de Gaulle, 1964, trans. Oliver Coburn (London: William Heinemann, 1966), 80.

⁵⁶ Adamthwaite, France and the Coming of the Second World War, 39.

⁵⁷ Richard D. Challener, "The Military Defeat of 1940 in Retrospect," in Modern France: Problems of the Third and Fourth Republics, ed. Edward Mead Earle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 407.

⁵⁸ Challener, Nation in Arms, 220.

CHAPTER FOUR

DE GAULLE'S VISION: THE ARMY OF THE FUTURE

Vers l'Armée de Métier first appeared as an article in the journal *Revue politique et parlementaire* on May 10, 1933, and was published in book form in May of the following year.¹ In it Major Charles de Gaulle propounds his theories regarding the future nature of the French Army. He expresses his concern that the political and economic situation of the so called "lean years" had obscured the fact that a fundamental reassessment of the doctrine and organization of the Army were necessary in light of the international and domestic realities of the early 1930s. The book is itself more of a political pamphlet, barely two hundred pages, in which de Gaulle points out not only the nature of the inadequacies within the army, but within the French state and society as well. The book did not find a wide audience, and only approximately 750 copies were sold in France.² It did however, gain a wide readership outside France, with eight thousand copies being sold in the Soviet Union in 1935.³

¹Brian Crozier, De Gaulle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 62.

²B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 62.

³Tournoux, Pétain and de Gaulle, 79.

The style of the book is quite different from the usual military writing and is much more on the order of the epic historical novel. In it de Gaulle displays an amazing familiarity with French history and heroic mythology. It is written in a lofty, perhaps, more correctly, noble, style calculated to display the author's abilities at erudition.⁴ It shows de Gaulle to be both historian and dramatist, not necessarily a good one, and the book is full of "thunder, pathos, lightning, and decision."⁵ His style made him, at least according to some "one of France's great poet-soldiers," a man who had achieved the reverse of Victor Hugo's wish: "If I had not been a poet, I would have been a soldier."⁶ De Gaulle sought through his writing to call up many of the traditional military heroes of France, both real and mythological, in an attempt to cast his own writings as having the same lineage. Heroes such as Napoleon, Roland, Vauban, and Berthier are among the host to which de Gaulle refers in his writing.

Through the use of the device of recalling the heroes of France's past, de Gaulle draws on a symbology which emphasizes the points he is making. In an exemplary passage, referring to the traditional superiority enjoyed by the combatants of ancient times, who possessed protection through the use of metal armor, de Gaulle states that:

⁴Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 37.

⁵Jean Lacouture, De Gaulle, 1965, trans. Francis K. Price (New York: New American Library, 1966), 46.

⁶David Schoenbrun, The Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle (New York: Atheneum Press, 1966), 34.

. . . without underrating the courage of the valiant Companions, one is not very much surprised at the piles of victims slain by the heroes of the "Chanson de Roland"- including the archbishop-one can understand the bravery of the Eudes de France at Montfaucon, and the fierceness of Renaud of Boulogne at Bouvines. Great losses in knights were only suffered when some cataclysm or strategem overcame the superiority in strength of the armored warriors; such as when they were crushed beneath the rocks at Roncevaux, tortured by fever and thirst at Mansourah and at Attine, or drowned in the canal at Courtrai.⁷

The book appealed to the nationalistic emotions in Frenchmen, saluting the most eminent soldiers of France, and quoting elegantly phrased chivalrous literature.⁸

De Gaulle's theories were not entirely new and, in fact, owed much of its substance to the earlier writings of Basil H. Liddell-Hart, the British Captain. Liddell-Hart had expounded many of the same views in his 1925 book, Paris, or the Future of War. Unfortunately, Liddell-Hart had also published a book shortly after the war, Reputations, which made him an extremely controversial figure within the French Army because of its sacrilegious assessment of the most prominent French generals of the First World War, particularly Joffre and Foch.⁹ De Gaulle had also drawn on the

⁷Charles de Gaulle, Vers l'Armée de Métier (The Army of the Future), 1934, trans. Walter Millis (New York: Lippincott, 1941), 66.

⁸Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 37.

⁹André Beaufre, "Liddell-Hart and the French Army, 1919-1939," in The Theory and Practice of War, ed. Michael Howard (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 131, 139.

ideas of General Estienne regarding the use of vehicles with caterpillar treads for the purpose of attaining speed and surprise.¹⁰

In the first section of the book, entitled Protection, de Gaulle sets out to explain the nature of French geography and the historical role it has played in the wars of the nation. In particular, the geography of the traditional invasion routes of the north are discussed in minute detail. The northeast frontier, in Flanders, leads the potential enemy successively to the Seine, the Aube, the Marne, the Aisne, and the Oise, from which it is then only necessary to follow the path of least resistance before the gates of Paris are within reach, open to an enemy advancing across a virtually indefensible plain.¹¹

De Gaulle holds that the protection afforded to other states by virtue of their geography, having been denied to France, necessitated that she follow the course of diplomacy in providing for the required security. This was particularly important, as the most feared and strongest of France's neighbors, Germany, menaced France on the feeblest of her frontiers.

De Gaulle likens the constantly warring Gauls and Teutons to tottering wrestlers who lean against each other for support and who have solved nothing and fulfilled nothing with their alternating victories over one another.¹² The two peoples are doomed, according to de Gaulle, to

10White, Seeds of Discord, 29.

11B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 63.

12De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 23.

constant vigilance and occasional warfare because of the lack of an effective border between them.

The question arises then, since de Gaulle felt that warfare between the German and French people was more to be thought of as the norm rather than the aberration, whether France had adopted the appropriate posture to protect itself. The answer was a resounding no. In a particularly cutting passage de Gaulle complains that over the course of a hundred conflicts in which the French exerted tremendous efforts, the initial exertions were always ill led, haphazard, poorly organized, and out of proportion to the eventual results achieved.¹³ He attributes this inability to react to crises at the outset to the peculiar characteristics which mark the French people, characteristics which he recognizes as extreme limitations in terms of discipline and cohesion, and which are echoed in the writings of Stanley Hoffmann, to be discussed below. He explains that:

Every Frenchman is too concerned for his own independence. Before committing himself, he considers the matter carefully, acts in unison with others only when he considers it expedient, and reserves his judgement with regard to hierarchy. Among us, solidarity and discipline have a quality of hesitancy reserve and instability which make common action uneven and awkward.¹⁴

With these words de Gaulle both praises and condemns, believing that the characteristics of the French nature which allow achievements in certain areas are the same characteristics which make her weak militarily. Everything about France which puts her in peril; her geography, the

¹³De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 33.

¹⁴De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 34.

composition of her political system, and the inherent tendencies of her people, can be offset only through the efforts of her soldiers. These very characteristics are the ones which, de Gaulle argues, necessitate that France field a professional army, without which he claims there can be no credible defense. He discounts as absurd the notion that France can be shielded through the employment of fixed defenses and fortifications and insists that France can be protected only through the employment of a strategy of maneuver.

As for the technique of regaining the capability to employ such a strategy, it is to be found, according to de Gaulle, in the employment of machines. De Gaulle argues that the machine age has transformed the very foundations of military matters in the same way that it has fundamentally transformed the nature of labor.

De Gaulle confidently announced that the conditions of warfare, which the machine had transformed by altering the scope of the power and range of weaponry, demanded fundamental changes in armies. He states that:

Modern conditions of military action demand, therefore, constantly increasing technical skill from fighting men. The equipment, which the force of events has introduced into the ranks, demands the gift, the taste, the habit of serving it. This is a consequence of evolution, ineluctable in the same way as the disappearance of candles or the end of sundials. The era of picked soldiers and selected crews has arrived.¹⁵

This concept of the army manned with soldier/technicians was a denial of the concept of the "nation in arms" which had been the operative philosophy governing the provision of manpower to the army during the First

¹⁵De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 53.

World War, indeed, since the time of the Revolution. De Gaulle recognized this, acknowledging that in general the politicians of the age looked askance at strictly military formations, believing them to be not only a distraction of the nations manpower, but also a potential threat to the Republic.

At the time of the publishing of the book the term of service for conscripts in the French Army was one year. This had been shortened from five years just after the war, and from the three years service required in the mid 1920s. According to de Gaulle, this was simply an insufficient amount of time to properly train a soldier in the use of modern military equipment. Moreover, it wasted the efforts of the training establishment, since the trained soldier returned to his former occupation within a short time. A more efficient use of the available manpower was envisioned by de Gaulle, who sought to lengthen the term of service in order that the soldier should become sufficiently knowledgeable in the use of the equipment, and that he should serve in a unit long enough that the unit should become a cohesive fighting force.

Not only was de Gaulle's plan for the manning the professional army a radical departure from the prevailing norm, but the contingencies for its eventual employment, as envisioned by de Gaulle, also represented a fundamental change in doctrine. An army such as that envisioned by de Gaulle had to be able, due to the status of international politics, the necessity of maintaining the Empire, and the requirement that France be able to assist her weaker neighbors, to operate outside the borders of France. The critical necessity, according to de Gaulle, was the restoration of the ability to

maneuver strategically on the battlefield, the lack of which he blamed for the carnage of the Great War.

Such an army, and such a policy for their employment, was contrary to the prevailing mentality, which sought to deploy a defensive army of conscripts and reservists behind a defensive wall, the Maginot Line.¹⁶ Many thought, and de Gaulle was well aware of their objections, that a professional army was essentially offensive in nature, leading governments to be aggressive in its deployment. These critics preferred an army of short service arrayed behind the fixed defenses on the frontier due to the supposed suitability of such formations for fostering peace. De Gaulle countered by arguing that the nation in arms was not inherently passive, any more than a professional army, loyal to the constituted government, would be aggressive, and that the resources provided to military leaders through mass mobilizations more often than not resulted in the squandering of those resources. This was in juxtaposition to the professional army, which, de Gaulle reasoned, would compel economy in its employment due to the difficulty of its replacement.¹⁷

The army which de Gaulle proposed was to be composed of six divisions, totally motorized, with all of the components at least partially armored, and with the principal combat vehicles, the tanks, being

¹⁶Theodore Ropp, War in the Modern World (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 303.

¹⁷De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 88-89.

"caterpillared." These formations were each to be equipped with some five hundred tanks.¹⁸

In order to gain the maximum effect from these new formations, it would be necessary, de Gaulle realized, to abandon the slavish reliance on historical experience to guide their use. It was clear to him that:

. . . when one is considering the employment of a picked army, speedy, powerful and well-protected, it is necessary, as a matter of principle, and even though it demands a mental effort, to abandon the use of conceptions which were applied to mass efforts during the last war. In particular, the continuity of fronts, the delays necessary for making preparations, the impossibility of developing local successes all of which are ideas which the force of events imposed as the basis of the tactics of numerical strength can have no value. On the other hand, independent enterprises, surprise, taking advantage of conditions, are all in perfect accordance with the character of the new instrument.¹⁹

This was a tactical and strategic conception quite out of line with that which envisioned defensive struggles, sieges, set piece battles, and operations independent of the air and sea forces. It was, indeed, a revolutionary thesis for the French Army of the 1930s, one which would require changes in manning, equipment, doctrine, command and control, and especially in the strategic thinking of the High Command. Even de Gaulle realized that his proposals, if adopted, would necessitate a revolution in the manner of leading troops, a revolution in which audacity, speed, and improvisation would again gain primacy as the operative philosophical tenets of the French Army.

¹⁸Ropp, War in the Modern World, 304.

¹⁹De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 126.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CAMPAIGN WITHIN THE MILITARY

The campaign conducted by de Gaulle and the other adherents to his theories of the professional army is an example of both the interaction between the military and the state and the interaction between and among military officers in determining military policy. It illuminates for the observer many of the internal and external motivations of the actors and the dynamics of the system itself.

Within an army a relatively strictly delimited environment exists within which argument and conflict can take place. The French Army of the 1930s was dominated by high ranking officers who, by dint of their combat experience and rank, were implicitly held to be the experts in their field. Having won the war, they were naturally convinced that their methods had been effective, in contrast to the officers of the German Army who were forced to confront the defeat of the Great War with its implication of faulty methodology. Below them were younger officers, de Gaulle among them, who had experienced the same war, but had distilled from their experiences somewhat different lessons. This relationship between the older generation and the younger manifested itself in a conflict over the doctrinal issues involved in mechanization.

Mechanization represented new technology, and required, according to de Gaulle, a new doctrinal framework within which to operate. The older generation of officers, Weygand, Pétain, and Gamelin, saw the tank as fitting within the doctrinal framework of their previous experience in the First World War, requiring adjustments, but no fundamental change in strategy or tactics. The one side perceived the tank as revolutionary, the other side saw it as essentially evolutionary. The principal threat posed by the professional army to the military, in the eyes of leaders such as Pétain, Weygand, and Gamelin, was that it would result in two "armies" in France; one well trained well equipped, receiving the lion's share of the available military credits, and one relegated to second class status and capability.

The conflict illustrates the natural dichotomy which exists between the necessity for obedience within the military and the need for the development of professional competence. Morris Janowitz argues that the hierarchy, entrenched in the past, will utilize its control of the hierarchy to suppress revolutionary ideas in the realm of tactics or technology. Military organizations are subject to the same inertia, the proclivity to maintain the status quo, that is inherent in all organizations, and, invariably, technological innovation will proceed at a faster pace and more efficiently than organizational change.¹ Change, then, must be induced. In the case of France change often is the result, according to the Hoffmann-Crozier model, of crisis and upheaval, such as that wrought by the events of 1940.

¹ Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait (New York: Free Press, 1960), 46-47.

The junior officer, in this case de Gaulle, is bound by duty to implement the orders of his superiors, but he is also bound to advance ideas in the interest of national security, consistent with military discipline. Otherwise, a rigid obedience can result in the stifling of ideas and initiative. In such a case, what are the limits of obedience and when does the subordinate cross the line between loyal dissent and insubordination. Whom does the officer serve, the nation (to the extent that he must ensure national survival by the provision of an adequate national defense), or his superiors (to whom he owes obedience).²

This dichotomy between military obedience and professional competence often results in conflict which necessitates that the officer make choices as to his own proper conduct. He must weigh his allegiances-to his own conscience, to his superiors, to the state at large (or the "nation", the "people"). He must balance his own instinct for success and self preservation against the moral necessity of pointing out grave errors and serious consequences, recognizing that his career is surely at stake. De Gaulle faced just such a dilemma and made what was, for him, the proper, indeed only, decision.

Conflicts of this nature are not governed by universal rules. Each army functions within a social, economic, and political environment which prescribes the broad range of conduct deemed acceptable among its officers. It is a matter of usage and tradition. What may be defined as proper

²Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 75-76.

conduct for an officer in airing grievances may be substantially different from one country to another, but what is clear is that there are bounds beyond which one will suffer censure and perhaps removal.

The French army of the 1930s was, generally speaking, apolitical. There is some dispute on this subject, with de la Gorce pointing to the right wing activities of the officer corps of the 1930s as the seeds from which the events of May, 1958 grew.³ Orville Menard, on the other hand, considers the army of the 1930s as little different from that of the early Third Republic. He perceives the same army as conforming to the traditional conception of "La Grand Muette" (The Great Mute). This tradition required the unquestioning obedience of the army to the orders of the state regardless of its political incarnation and noninterference in political matters.⁴ This conforms to the "Liberal Model" of civilian control over the military, in which civilians holding the highest government offices, whether elected or appointed, are responsible for and competent in determining domestic and foreign policy, legal administration, and in resolving conflict among competing social, economic, and political groups. The officers are trained in the management and application of force in the name of the state, responsible for the protection of the state from external and internal threats. Within this model

³Paul-Marie de la Gorce, The French Army: A Military-Political History, trans. Kenneth Douglas (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 217-251.

⁴Orville D. Menard, The Army and the Fifth Republic (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 10.

the military accepts a clearly subordinate position, accepting the maximum possible depoliticization of the military function.⁵

Politically, the majority of French officers of the period were moderate progressives, recognizing that machines would play an important part in future warfare, but they also stressed the nature of the associated problems, difficulties, and uncertainties.⁶ Ambler believes the army may have been too passive in its acceptance of the mandates of its civilian overseers, especially with respect to modernization.⁷ The role of the civilian authorities in the rejection of the mechanization of the French Army will be discussed in greater detail below.

In 1934 Charles de Gaulle was a Major in the French Army. He was a graduate of the Military Academy at St. Cyr and had held a variety of assignments. He had served in an infantry battalion at Arras under then Colonel Pétain as his initial assignment, had served admirably in the war, having been wounded, cited for bravery, and captured at Verdun in 1916. He spent the remainder of the war in various prisons, escaping on several occasions only to be caught shortly thereafter, and was imprisoned at Ingolstadt when the Armistice was signed. While in prison he met several soldiers who would figure in his later life, most prominently Rémy Roure, M.

⁵Eric A. Nordlinger, Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 12-13.

⁶Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 600.

⁷John Steward Ambler, The French Army in Politics 1945-1962 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966), 3-7.

Berger-Levrault (who later published his book), and Lieutenant Tukhachevsky of the Imperial Russian Army.⁸

After the war he participated in the campaign in Poland against the Bolsheviks, taught history at the French Military Academy, and attended the French Army Staff College. He later served on Marshal Pétain's staff, commanded the 19th Battalion of Chasseurs at Trèves, and served on the General Staff of the French Army of the Rhine and in the Levant. In 1932 he was detailed to the Secrétariat Général de la Défense National, the planning staff of the Premier and the central government. It was while serving in this capacity that he authored Vers l'Armée de Métier.⁹

De Gaulle was an officer known as a nonconformist and as an intelligent but arrogant student. He had earned his reputation among the senior officers of the army while at St. Cyr and the Ecole Supérieure de la Guerre.¹⁰ At St. Cyr he aroused the ire of his superiors by constantly lecturing them on his theories of warfare. At the Staff College he became a very unpopular officer, particularly so when he "defeated" General Moyrand, the school's leading theorist, in a mock tactical exercise in which he utilized his theories against Moyrand's elaborately constructed defenses. He was punished for this transgression by a demotion in position at the Staff

⁸Schoenbrun, Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle, 33-38.

⁹Charles de Gaulle, The Call to Honor: 1940-1942, 1954, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: Viking Press, 1955), vol. 1, The War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle, 4-9; Schoenbrun, Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle, 38-54.

¹⁰Alexander Werth, De Gaulle: A Political Biography (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), 75.

College.¹¹ He had outlined his personal philosophy and foreshadowed future events in his book Le Fil de l'Épée, wherein he describes the character traits of the proper officer. Among those he prizes are the ability to ignore the "conventions of false discipline" and the ability to be guided by a sense of inner wisdom rather than a wish to please.¹²

De Gaulle was fully cognizant of the fact that his thesis was likely to be a particularly hard sell within the French Army itself. He acknowledges as much in the closing pages of his book, noting that:

The creation of a properly equipped army of volunteers, however necessary and in harmony with the tendency of evolution it may be, nevertheless represents a reform of very broad scope. Established ideas will be modified by it, like the policy and technique of war. In the history of the French Army there are only at the most four or five upheavals comparable to it in scope and consequences. Such a refashioning will be painful to the military body.¹³

The ideas embodied in de Gaulle's treatise were by no means new, even in France. Military writers, men such as General Hubert Camon and Colonel Émile Alléhaut had written as early as the 1920s, that the war of the trenches could only be replaced by a war of movement with the adaptation of the gasoline engine to the purpose.¹⁴ In the early 1920s General Estienne had championed the idea of independent tank formations, but was, as

¹¹Schoenbrun, Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle, 43-45.

¹²Werth, De Gaulle: A Political Biography, 78-80.

¹³De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 175.

¹⁴Challener, Nation in Arms, 246-247.

discussed previously, unable to prevent the relegation of the tank to the role of infantry support.

Tanks were seen as mobile firepower, useful only in support of the infantry. The French Army, like other armies of the interwar period, were reluctant to adopt the ambitious ideas of the proponents of armored warfare due to the questions concerning the appropriate means of providing for the communications, supply, and artillery cover within independent tank formations.¹⁵ The General Staff thought that speed of movement and the employment of great masses of mechanized equipment were unnecessary, and that the ability to maneuver such armored formations behind fortifications would be limited.¹⁶ The arguments used by de Gaulle's detractors sounded curiously familiar, as they were the same objections which had arisen in France against the ideas of Estienne in the 1920s and against Liddell-Hart in Britain during the same period.

De Gaulle's book was received, as described by Alden Hatch, "like a yawn in the bedchamber at the hour of the siesta."¹⁷ This reception was not, however, universal, and evidence exists that as early as 1934 both Hitler and Ribbentrop were familiar with the name and notions of Major de Gaulle.¹⁸

¹⁵ Michael Howard, War in European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 131.

¹⁶ White, Seeds of Discord, 21.

¹⁷ Hatch, De Gaulle Nobody Knows, 64; Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), vol. 1, The Second World War, 282.

¹⁸ Thomson, Two Frenchmen, 133.

The impact of de Gaulle's article was not great, and the reaction to it, particularly in the military hierarchy, was one of irritation.¹⁹ André Géraud recounts the story of an encounter which he overheard between de Gaulle and one of the officers on Weygand's staff which occurred at a party at Géraud's residence, and which was typical of the reaction. The officer was Colonel de Lattre de Tassigny, later hero of the war and Marshal of France. The Colonel assailed de Gaulle's thesis, but de Gaulle, "with an abundance of argument and considerable violence, held his ground."²⁰

De Gaulle's theories were attacked by General Weygand in an article in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* in which he claimed that tanks and airplanes would not modify war to any appreciable extent.²¹ They were also attacked by General Debeney in an article he wrote for the same publication. The thrust of the reasoning which Weygand used in attacking the ideas of de Gaulle were related to his notion of the links between the army and the nation and the damage de Gaulle's professional army would do them. Weygand did not advocate that the army be completely apolitical, silent, and isolated, but thought instead that the army operated in a sort of parallel universe from that of the civilians.²² This was a largely Clausewitzian notion, which placed the civilian authorities above the army, but which

19B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 62.

20Pertinax, Gravediggers of France, 19.

21Maxime Weygand, "L'Etat militaire de la France," La Revue des Deux Mondes 35 (October 1936): 721-26; White, Seeds of Discord, 30.

22Bankwitz, "Maxime Weygand and the Army-Nation Concept," 175.

allowed the army a great degree of internal autonomy based on its claim of service to the nation.²³ This particular notion is quite in line with the interpretation of the way in which bureaucracies operate according to the writings of Michel Crozier, in which portions of the same bureaucracy may operate separately, with little or no coordination, with little interaction, with no integrated program in support of the overall goals of the government, and with virtually complete autonomy.

Some defenders did, however, write favorable articles in the *Revue*, among them Daniel Halévy and Rémy Roure (writing under the pseudonym Pierre Fervacque).²⁴

General Gamelin vacillated, defending de Gaulle's ideas in some of the high war councils, but retreating from his position on encountering intense opposition among other members of the group.²⁵ He was more a functionary and bureaucrat than soldier, not a "fighting man." He did not inspire, nor did he animate those under his command.²⁶ Such a description, while atypical of that usually associated with a soldier, is reminiscent of the description of the government functionaries found in Crozier.

The nature of the campaign within the military is typical of that within such a bureaucratic hierarchy and conforms in many details to the model of

²³Bankwitz, "Maxime Weygand and the Army-Nation Concept," 175-176.

²⁴B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 74; Lacouture, De Gaulle, 47.

²⁵B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 74.

²⁶Pertinax, Gravediggers of France, 33-34.

political interaction of Stanley Hoffmann. It was conducted largely through articles in journals. It is illustrative that de Gaulle chose to publish his article in a journal which was devoted to Parliament and the military, while his opponents, Weygand and Debennet chose to defend government military policy in a primarily military journal. This reflects, I believe, the fact that de Gaulle was perfectly well aware of the likelihood of a rebuff in military circles. He hoped from the outset to stimulate debate in the public sphere. It is also significant that the debate was conducted through articles, in a very impersonal manner, requiring no face-to-face confrontations, no direct refusals, and no compromises. The recourse to the conduct of the campaign through articles in journals is in conformity with the avoidance of face to face confrontation found in the Hoffmann-Crozier model.

The time had come for de Gaulle to choose between his military career and his mission of fostering his professional army.²⁷ At the General Headquarters it was felt that France already possessed a sufficient number of tanks, and this was an opinion which it appeared increasingly apparent that de Gaulle was unlikely to alter.²⁸ De Gaulle was struck from the 1936 promotion list to Lieutenant Colonel on the direct orders of General Maurin, the Minister of War, on whose staff de Gaulle was then serving, as a means of signifying to de Gaulle his displeasure not only with his military theories, but with the program of political lobbying with which he was furthering them. Maurin was particularly agitated by the necessity of having to work with de

27B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 62.

28B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 63.

Gaulle on a daily basis, knowing as he did that de Gaulle was actively involved in the forwarding of proposals which Maurin was against.²⁹ He was shunted off to service with a tank unit, as a means of avoiding personal confrontation and face to face discussion with him on the subject of mechanization. This tactic is again in perfect conformity with the Hoffmann-Crozier model of authority relations and personal interaction in the process of decision making.

The period of the "phoney war" afforded one last opportunity for de Gaulle to convert his military superiors and the government. To this end, he dispatched a memorandum on January 26, 1940. In it he expressed his view that the utilization of armored forces by the Germans in the Polish campaign had fundamentally altered the situation and had vindicated his position regarding the proper employment of France's tanks. He again urged the formation of armored divisions from the dispersed French tank units. General Dufieux, former Commander of Tanks, wrote Gamelin on the matter, saying that, "De Gaulle's conclusions must be rejected."³⁰ Such opinions held the day, even at the late juncture of Winter 1939-1940, and the memorandum was little heeded.³¹

29B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 74.

30Shirer, Collapse of the Third Republic, 533-534.

31Thomson, Two Frenchmen, 135; Osgood, Fall of France, 141.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE PUBLIC FORUM

De Gaulle's thesis was, by his own admission, political in nature, the tone of the book was political in nature, the campaign by which de Gaulle and his allies sought to gain acceptance and implementation of the program was political, and the rejection of the proposal by the National Assembly and the governing administrations was fundamentally political. De Gaulle's campaign for his professional army must, therefore, be analyzed as a political phenomenon, unlike other military proposals which, although having political ramifications, are not basically political. Certain decisions regarding equipment, training, and doctrine may fall into this latter category.

De Gaulle himself, though completely convinced of the critical necessity of the adoption of his proposals, was less than optimistic about the prospects. He did not deny that the creation of his army had serious political implications.¹ In one of the closing passages of Vers l'Armée de Métier he states:

If one looks only at appearances, one might think, it is true, that the conditions in which the state functions today allow no one the authority or the time to carry through such an undertaking. There are so many dissents and so many contingencies in public

¹Bernard Ledwidge, De Gaulle (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 43.

life that the best activities, even when they are set in motion, seldom lead to results. But this very paralysis creates the desire for a cure in our old world. Between the fervors of the social system and the sclerosis of power, opposition is too flagrant.²

De Gaulle was well aware of the animosity and suspicion which marked the relationship between the army and its civilian masters, having exposed his feelings on the matter in his lectures at the Staff College, compiled in a book entitled Le Fil de l'Epée (translated as Edge of the Sword), published in 1932, in which he states:

It is a fact that the army finds it difficult to give unquestioning support to the civil power. Since, however, discipline is of its essence, and has become, as it were, a second nature, there is never any actual refusal to obey orders, but there is little happiness in its sense of subordination . . . In all ranks, no matter what the régime of the moment may be, there has never failed to be a spirit of independence which finds outward expression in an attitude of coldness.³

The inspiration to write Vers l'Armée de Métier may have come from the group with which de Gaulle socialized in the years prior to the book's publication. De Gaulle's association with the group sheds much light on his political sympathies. It was a circle which discussed on a regular basis the shape of the world to come. He was introduced to the group by his friend Lucien Nachin. The group's leader, Lieutenant Colonel Émile Mayer, was a retired Jewish officer, a graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique, who had damaged his career by proclaiming the innocence of Captain Dreyfus at too early a stage. He had become, in his retirement, a commentator on military

2De Gaulle, Army of the Future, 178.

3Charles de Gaulle, The Edge of the Sword, 1932, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Criterion Books, 1960), 107.

affairs. The group also included Rémy Roure, the journalist with *Le Temps* and veteran of Verdun, and Paul Grunebaum-Ballin, Mayer's son-in-law and a political activist, the publisher Berger-Levrault, and, of course, Nachin.⁴ Nachin, a former enlisted man who had risen to become a talented officer, was to become a particularly important associate, functioning as de Gaulle's "manager."⁵ De Gaulle's association with the group, which held regular meetings at the Brasserie Dumesnil, across the street from the Gare Montparnasse, nourished him, and their favorable impression of his early work on leadership led him to turn his attention to the type of army and weapons France would need in the future.⁶

One has to ask why de Gaulle chose to name the book Toward a Professional Army instead of Toward a Mechanized Army. No doubt some thought this to be a serious error, since its title alone could not help but agitate those on the Left. There existed no strictly military reason for the adoption of such a title, as there need not have been any connection whatever between the concept of the professionalization of the army and the concept of mechanization. Armies, including the French, had been able to absorb new weaponry and tactics and increasingly sophisticated equipment of all kinds up until then without the benefit of long serving soldiers. Was the tank so much more complicated that it necessitated such measures? I do not

⁴Hatch, De Gaulle Nobody Knows, 64; Lacouture, De Gaulle, 41-42.

⁵Lacouture, De Gaulle, 41.

⁶Ledwidge, De Gaulle, 38-39.

believe so. Was not the equipment of the Wehrmacht in 1940 operated successfully by the soldiers who had been conscripted beginning in 1935?

Perhaps the case was, and I believe this to be the most probable explanation, that de Gaulle was deliberately attempting to create an uproar and so draw attention to the book and its plan, which he thought of paramount importance to the country.⁷ It did, indeed, cause a stir in political circles. Objections to the thesis centered on the elitist, professional nature of the army, thought by the Left to represent a potential threat to the state, and on what was perceived as the inherently aggressive nature of tanks and armored formations, suitable only for offensive employment.⁸

There existed not only a great weight of prejudice against the new ideas embodied in the book, but also hostility against de Gaulle himself.⁹ Both the High Command and the politicians of the Senate and Chamber knew a great deal about him, and he annoyed them both intensely. His personality aroused in them an acute sense of aggravation.¹⁰ There was about him an "intransigence, a stiffness, and a critical attitude." Even de

⁷Tournoux, Pétain and de Gaulle, 76; Perhaps even renaming the book would not have softened the impact, as one General was against mechanization because, "mechanics were sure to be radicals." Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Chronology of Failure: The Last Days of the French Republic (New York: McMillan, 1940), 185.

⁸Donald Cameron Watt, Too Serious a Business: European Armed Forces and the Approach to the Second World War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 71.

⁹B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 63.

¹⁰White, Seeds of Discord, 26.

Gaulle's closest ally, Paul Reynaud, said of him, "de Gaulle has the character of a stubborn pig."¹¹

De Gaulle initially took up the campaign by making the circuit of newspapers, attempting to convince editors to receive him and to persuade them that his "copy" was worth reading. He soon had enlisted two more renowned journalists; André Pironneau of *L'Echo de Paris* on the right, and Émile Buré of *L'Ordre* on the left, in addition to the centrist Roure.¹²

De Gaulle felt that it was imperative to draw other public men into the program, to, so to speak, ". . . play the melody on various instruments"¹³ He realized that it would be necessary for him to "link up with a rising politician, a prospective minister, and become his 'technical adviser.'"¹⁴ This he accomplished through Lieutenant Colonel Mayer. Mayer had encouraged many of his friends to read the book, among them the writer Jean Auburtin, who was acquainted with the independent conservative member of Parliament, Paul Reynaud.¹⁵ De Gaulle became the "silent partner" of a political team with Reynaud, whom he had convinced of the merit of his program. Other politicians, very much in the minority, were also sympathetic to de Gaulle's views on modernization, among them Gaston Palewski,

¹¹White, Seeds of Discord, 27.

¹²Lacouture, De Gaulle, 47.

¹³De Gaulle, Call to Honor, 18.

¹⁴Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 37.

¹⁵Ledwidge, De Gaulle, 41-42.

Alexandre Millerand, and M. Paul-Boncour.¹⁶ Perhaps more significant were de Gaulle's adherents on the left; Philippe Serre of *La Jeune République*, the Blum disciple Léo Lagrange, and Marcel Déat (before his conversion to Fascism).¹⁷ This assortment of individuals represented a variety of opinion and political sentiment, and reflected the fact that de Gaulle was willing to seek allies in any camp.¹⁸

The Left viewed de Gaulle's professional army as a Praetorian Guard, likely to be as interested in seizing power as in defending the nation, while on the right it was viewed as a potential "hotbed of Communism."¹⁹ The Third Republic had inherited from Napoleon III and Boulanger a fear of "men on horseback."²⁰ In addition, the army was considered to have grown too powerful during the Great War, with the Union Sacrée being a virtual military dictatorship.²¹

The parliamentary climate was hostile to de Gaulle's ideas, owing to the defensive-mindedness, complacency and apathy which prevailed. The opposition was led by the former war minister Edouard Daladier, who

¹⁶White, Seeds of Discord, 32-33.

¹⁷Lacouture, De Gaulle, 52.

¹⁸Ledwidge, De Gaulle, 45; Henry W. Ehrmann, Politics in France (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968), 143-144.

¹⁹B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 63.

²⁰Pertinax, Gravediggers of France, 35.

²¹Adamthwaite, France and the Coming of the Second World War, 30.

insisted on a strategy of fortification in the debates of March 1935.²² Daladier also insisted on the tight control of the military through the military budget and rejected a suggestion from a member on the right that some of the budget negotiations be conducted in secret committees, stating, "The clear eyed control of the parliament over our military organization is an essential element of French security."²³

De Gaulle's champion in the campaign, Paul Reynaud, defended his ideas during the debate of March 15, 1935 on the bill which would extend military service to two years. Reynaud had, as far back as 1924, advocated a modern army which could deal speedily with emergencies.²⁴ The former finance minister advocated the creation of an armored corps, to be in place not later than April of 1940, in a speech said to have been written by de Gaulle himself.²⁵ The speech was indeed prescient, as in it Reynaud declared:

Let us make a hypothesis. War is declared tomorrow and Belgium is invaded. Such a fact is not without precedent. If we lack the means to go immediately to her rescue and to help her cover her Eastern frontier what will happen? What will happen is perhaps what has already happened. It is possible that the Belgian army may be thrown back towards the sea. For us, that means 350 kilometers of open frontier to the north of France, to be defended. Is there anybody here who, in advance, accepts

²²B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 68.

²³Vagts, History of Militarism, 421.

²⁴White, Seeds of Discord, 25.

²⁵B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 69; Lacouture describes the speech as having been edited "on all of its essential points" by de Gaulle. Lacouture, De Gaulle, 50.

the idea of seeing the richest provinces of France once again invaded and torn from the Motherland?²⁶

His speech was concluded with the words, "If we do not get the armored corps, everything is lost."²⁷ The chamber rejected the proposals and the emotional rebuttal by General Maurin was cheered enthusiastically by the assembled members of the chamber.²⁸ In his speech he uncovered the true thinking of the General Staff when he said, "How can one believe that we should again think of an offensive when we have spent milliards in order to construct a fortified barrier? Would we be mad enough to advance beyond this barrier on some unpredictable adventure?"²⁹

De Gaulle had hoped that Reynaud's speech would alert the country, as he thought it necessary that both the Parliament and the press be shaken up. However, it was considered very bad form for de Gaulle to have brought his proposals to the attention of Reynaud, and he was regarded as an outcast after the speech.³⁰

The economic difficulties of the 1930s had led to a considerable degree of discontent among both the working class and among the middle class. During this period some of the discontent in the middle class, from which many officers were recruited, channelled itself into the formation of

26B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 69.

27B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 69.

28Schoenbrun, Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle, 56-57.

29Paul Reynaud, In the Thick of the Fight, 1951, trans. James D. Lambert (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1955), 109.

30Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 37; Lacouture, De Gaulle, 51.

organizations with pro-Fascist leanings. Organizations such as the *Croix de Feu* and *Action française* had large followings among veterans groups and among serving officers. Clashes erupted into bloodshed on February 6, 1934, in the wake of the Stavisky affair, when these groups attempted to seize the Palais-Bourbon. The movement might have expected the support of de Gaulle, especially since the views expressed in *Le Fil de l'Epée* were in such evident accordance with their own. De Gaulle, however, sought not to involve himself in partisan matters, preferring instead to maintain a strict independence from any particular party or group.³¹ This was yet another incident in the continuing struggle between right and left in France, and was responsible for generating widespread acceptance on the Left for the necessity of a Popular Front.³²

De Gaulle's political orientation was of a more Rightist nature, and he was deeply skeptical of the coalition of Communists, Socialists, and Radicals who came to power in 1936 as the *Front Populaire* under the leadership of Léon Blum. He believed that the social reforms which the Popular Front sought to institute, including a reduced work week, were likely to detract from the defense effort, thereby retarding preparations for war, and were also likely to exacerbate tensions within France.³³

³¹Malcolm Anderson, *Conservative Politics in France* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1974), 59.

³²Anderson, *Conservative Politics in France*, 60.

³³De Gaulle, *Call to Honor*, 19-21.

The Popular Front government, which took office in June, while anti-Fascist, was also concerned with long overdue social reform. It was incumbent upon Blum to satisfy his supporters, whose principal grievances were unemployment and the warmongering of the *marchands de canon*.³⁴ These reforms were opposed by the propertied classes. The Popular Front was not insensitive to the needs of French security, and rearmament was high on the Popular Front's agenda. When French conservative military leaders demanded greater expenditures on the military the suspicion arose that such expenditures were intended to ruin the program of social reform.³⁵

Guy Chapman notes in Why France Collapsed that de Gaulle's book, "With its commendation of a specialized standing army . . . was peculiarly calculated to raise the hair and fury of every historically minded democrat, particularly of Léon Blum." De Gaulle's armored divisions could, it was feared, become the "shock troops" of a Fascist coup.³⁶

De Gaulle evidently chose to forward his program in a politically provocative manner, connecting the professional manning of the army with the armored force for, as previously explained, no palpable military reason. There was no need for the two to be inseparable, and this conjunction could only serve to agitate suspicious parliamentarians. De Gaulle and Reynaud also gave short shrift to the potential difficulties in creating their force, and by

34Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 30.

35A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (New York: Fawcett Premier Books, 1961), 115-116.

36Chapman, Why France Collapsed, 37.

agitating so vociferously hampered the efforts of moderates such as Colonel Pol-Maurice Velpy, who had succeeded General Estienne as the head of the Tank Inspectorate.³⁷ Such orthodox pro-mechanization advocates had been working within the establishment and had achieved some successes, but were hindered by the tenor of the de Gaulle-Reynaud campaign.³⁸ In his defense de Gaulle states that, "If I had felt that there was no hurry, I would indeed have been content to advocate my thesis in specialist circles, sure that, with evolution on their side, my arguments would make their way."³⁹

The truth of the matter was that French public opinion was mainly indifferent to the controversy surrounding de Gaulle's proposals and of the necessity of overhauling defense policy. There existed in 1936, in spite of Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland, a profound indifference to international affairs.⁴⁰ French power had eroded in the 1930s through a combination of factors, including inept diplomacy and domestic crises which drained French leadership. The energies of leaders were expended on the search for economic recovery and the defense of the franc.⁴¹ Churchill observed in his memoirs that, ". . . the attention of the French government to

³⁷Clarke, "Military Technology in Republican France," 60.

³⁸Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 619-620.

³⁹De Gaulle, Call to Honor, 15.

⁴⁰Werth, De Gaulle: A Political Biography, 84.

⁴¹Adamthwaite, France and the Coming of the Second World War, xiii.

the dangers of the European scene was distracted by the ceaseless whirlpool of internal politics at the moment."⁴²

De Gaulle held political beings such as Léon Blum in deep contempt, but was given the opportunity to explain his military views to Blum in a meeting arranged by their mutual acquaintance, Lieutenant Colonel Mayer.⁴³ The meeting took place in September, 1936, after the reoccupation of the Rhineland had made plain for all to see the true intentions of Hitler, in Blum's office in the Hotel Matignon. Thereafter, in the light of the renewed German threat, Blum tried to convince his War Minister, Daladier, of the validity of de Gaulle's thesis, but Daladier could not be persuaded that autonomous tank divisions and an aggressive counterattack strategy were of value.⁴⁴ Shortly thereafter Blum's War Minister initiated an extremely expensive program of modernization of the land forces, in consonance with the Popular Front's desire to increase defense expenditures in the wake of the altered international political scene, but the expenditures merely increased funding of programs already in place and did not alter in any way the strategy, doctrine, or structure of the army.

⁴²Churchill, Gathering Storm, 282.

⁴³B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 72.

⁴⁴Jean Lacouture, Léon Blum, 1977, trans. George Holoch (New York: Holmes & Meyer Publishers, 1982), 301.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALTERNATIVE COURSES: BRITAIN AND GERMANY

France was, of course, not the only nation faced with the complex issues of strategy and military doctrine associated with the emergence of new technologies such as the tank. Advances in the technical means for the waging of war had been emerging at a quick pace, requiring for their optimum employment appropriate organizational and doctrinal frameworks. The adoption of these support systems was, as we have seen, problematic in France, owing to a degree of intractability within the military coupled with no less a degree of resistance within the political sphere. The lack of foresight in the preparation for the use of modern technological weaponry displayed by the French stands in marked contrast to the course which events took in Britain and Germany.

It must be stated at the outset that France, Britain, and Germany faced vastly different strategic situations in the period between the world wars, and therefore required military organizations quite different from that of France. However, the discussion of the strategic implications of the political, economic, and military positions of these nations relative to one another is beyond the scope of this work. Indeed, a comprehensive comparison between the political and military interaction which produced the varying responses to the questions posed by the emerging technologies has been

the subject of several books, notably Posen's The Sources of Military Doctrine, and will not be dealt with at length here. A comparison may be profitably made, however, between these countries regarding the subject of this work, namely, the political environment which produced the response to the emerging technology. Such a discussion will serve to illustrate that alternative courses did, in fact, exist, and that the policy outcomes of the political debates over military technology could have been much different if conducted in a different political culture and environment where a greater degree of military-civilian cooperation and trust existed.

Two authors have given us valuable accounts of the civil-military environments prevailing in these countries during the period in which the decisions on strategy, tactics, and force structure for the 1930s and 1940s were decided. In the case of Britain, C. P. Snow has traced the events surrounding the development and implementation of the air defense system which was to prove so crucial to the survival of that country in July-September, 1940 in his lectures contained in the 1961 book Science and Government.¹ The book recounts the story of the development of RADAR, of the man most responsible for its development, Sir Henry Tizard, and of the decisionmaking process by which the system came into being. In the case of Germany, the best sense of the nature of the decisionmaking process involved in the development and implementation of the armored force is to be gained through the insights into the process contained in the 1952 book

¹C. P. Snow, Science and Government (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

Panzer Leader,² by the soldier renowned as the creator of the "Blitzkrieg," General Heinz Guderian. From these sources, supplemented by others, an overview of the comparisons can be achieved.

Britain, had, in the period following the Great War, produced several of the most prominent military theorists responsible for the revolution in land warfare associated with the employment of armored forces. However, owing to the strategic realities imposed on Britain because of her geography, and because of the reluctance, already noted, to commit substantial resources to planning for another Continental war, primacy was given to the naval and air arms. Britain had possessed a powerful navy for several hundred years. The Great War and its aftermath had not altered this commitment to the navy in any fundamental way, but the prospect of the bombardment of Britain in any future conflict, which began to produce a great deal of concern among the leaders of the British civilian leadership as the threat of war became greater,³ produced the real technological problems of concern here.

The doctrine of strategic bombing had been advanced and demonstrated by soldiers such as Italy's Giulio Douhet and America's William "Billy" Mitchell. The British had recognized that they were more vulnerable to such attacks than many countries, and had begun, with prodding from Churchill and Baldwin, to "beat around" for a solution.⁴ They

²Heinz Guderian, Panzer Leader, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon (Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co., 1952).

³Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 143.

⁴Snow, Science and Government, 24.

were opposed by those within the military establishment who held the view that bomber penetration could not be prevented.⁵

Henry Tizard, a prominent physicist, was appointed the head of an Air Ministry "Committee for the Scientific Study of Air Defence," thereafter known as the Tizard Committee, which began meeting in January of 1935 for the purpose of organizing the research, development and employment of a defensive system. Tizard was allowed to choose the members of this committee himself, and he chose men of impeccable technical credentials and energy, though not necessarily of his political persuasion. More importantly, he chose men who had an ability to identify and sympathize with the military men with whom they would have to deal by virtue of their own military service.⁶ This was critical to the success of the venture because of the necessity of indoctrinating the military, who were quite enamored of the concept of strategic bombing and sought to expend resources on bombers rather than on the radar equipment and fighter aircraft which would be required for the provision of a credible air defense.

The oversight mechanism through which the committee interacted with the government and Air Ministry assured that decisions of the Committee were turned into funds and equipment with the least possible friction, and it is this mechanism which distinguishes the British experience from the French. Contention was lessened because Tizard, a member of the "Establishment" of British society, reported to Air Minister Swinton through a subcommittee of

⁵Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 142.

⁶Snow, Science and Government, 25-26.

the Committee of the Imperial Defence, a *political* committee, which included opposition leaders like Baldwin and Churchill. Churchill insisted that his personal scientific advisor, F. A. Lindemann (Lord Cherwell), sit on Tizard's committee, causing a good deal of friction within the group thereafter, but the feuding did not disrupt the early stages of the work sufficiently, nor deter Tizard to the extent that the effect was crippling. When Tizard had at last concluded that there was something of substance in radar, the "good ole' boy" net of the Establishment was made aware of his requirements, with the military and opposition having been involved in this informal way in the decision from the outset.⁷

The German system of civil-military integration on the issue of emerging doctrine and technology was much less elaborate and subtle, but no less effective. The nature of political authority in Germany was quite different from that in Britain. Hitler, as dictator, had no need of accommodating opposition, having consolidated his power over the apparatus of government by the end of 1934.⁸ Hitler's control of the army was also complete, as the army recognized him as the legal head of state.

The reception of the armored idea was nearly as cool in Germany as it had been in France. The officers of the General Staff, having also experienced the employment of tanks during the Great War, were quite impressed with its potential power, but considered it as an evolutionary development, as did their French counterparts. The older arms of Infantry

⁷Snow, Science and Government, 28.

⁸Guderian, Panzer Leader, 34.

and Cavalry held sway in the German Army, and were hostile to the idea, forwarded by Guderian, that tanks could form a separate striking arm.⁹ They insisted that the tank was much better suited to the role of infantry support. The arguments of Guderian were countered by the argument, quite logical, that if the tank represented a technology which could alter the face of battle, the technological developments in anti-tank guns and fortifications were no less important, and negated the former.

The intransigence of the General Staff was overcome through the intervention of the political authorities, namely Hitler, who became aware of Guderian's work and was won over to the idea of tank warfare. Hitler sought to implement his strategy through the propagation of land warfare which was to be of short duration. The tank was a weapon which promised to achieve the quick results he desired, and was therefore, supported by Hitler through personal pressure.¹⁰ He thereafter took a keen interest in the design and production of tanks, often attending the field trials of the vehicles.¹¹ He appointed Guderian as General of Panzer Troops, Chief of Mobile Troops, to oversee the program of mechanization. Guderian was at first reluctant to accept the appointment, preferring to remain in tank units, since he felt that the post was largely powerless. Hitler, on hearing these objections, gave Guderian authority over all mobile troops, doctrine, and equipment, with

⁹Guderian, Panzer Leader, 26.

¹⁰Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 181; Guderian, Panzer Leader, 30.

¹¹Friedrich Wilhelm von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, trans. H. Betzler (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), xvii.

personal access to him in the event that resistance was encountered.¹² In this way the civilian authority of the government was used to reinforce the hand of the advocates of the new technologies, and the military establishment was forced to accommodate the so-called mavericks pressing for their adoption.

The difference, then, between the experiences of the French, British, and Germans relative to the question of the adoption of emerging technology hinges not on the military, for substantial resistance to innovation was evident within the military hierarchy of all three countries, but on the political. The manner in which the resistance of the military was avoided, overcome, or overridden in Britain and Germany made all the difference. The inability and unwillingness of the civilian government to impose solutions on the French military establishment, so critical as the impetus for change in the strategy, tactics, doctrine, and equipment in the armed forces of the other nations, was the principal cause, I believe, of the failure of the adoption of the measures advocated by de Gaulle.

¹²Guderian, Panzer Leader, 61-62.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

As a political program the campaign for de Gaulle's professional army followed a course within the French political system of the period, conformed in many ways to the course of other political programs, and suffered a similar fate. It is noteworthy for several reasons. It was a program that, if adopted, might have affected the outcome of the clashes of 1940. It was a campaign which had a profound effect on the political outlook of its main protagonist, Charles de Gaulle, a serving officer who would not have been expected to conduct a political campaign. It played what I believe to be a critical role in formulating his thoughts relative to his eventual break with Pétain and the "legitimate" government in 1940. It is significant in that it figures prominently in the Gaullist mythmaking which surrounded de Gaulle in his later political incarnation. Otherwise, the campaign itself follows a course which one could have predicted using Hoffmann's model. The events conform to the model particularly closely in the two areas of power relations and associational life.

The program was conceived and advanced as as much a moral imperative of the French army and state as a political imperative. The concerned parties reacted to the proposals based on their having been filtered through their own ideological and political lens. I do not mean by this political parties, but those who concerned themselves with the concept of the

mechanization of the French Army, since the adherents which de Gaulle recruited were, as we have already seen, from diverse political backgrounds. Each of the concerned parties staked out their moral and political turf and defended it, refusing to acknowledge that compromise was possible or to be sought after. In the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust which marked political interaction the parties reacted to the program not on its merit relative to the external threat, but on its potential impact on the domestic scene. Reaction was based to a large extent on the degree to which the program could potentially upset the delicate domestic political balance, the degree to which it posed a potential threat to the legal government in the opinion of the leaders of the Left, and the degree to which it failed to conform to strategic conceptions then in vogue. The peculiar nature of French associational life, as described by Hoffmann, reflecting high degrees of atomism, individuality, and distrust of the state, and characterized by conflict and polarization, explains these reactions.

Within the army itself reaction was based on the degree of conformity which the program had with historical perspectives of the senior officers. The concerned parties in the army hierarchy defended the status quo fiercely, and that largely through impersonal interaction through the military journals. Reaction was also based to a large extent on the prejudices concerning the program's author, Major de Gaulle. De Gaulle himself was the issue.

The campaign by de Gaulle for the adoption of his professional army is an example of the workings of conflicts within armies over doctrine and technology. It is illustrative of the nature of the conflict that while de Gaulle first proposed his ideas in the Parliamentary and Military Revue, the military

leaders who argued against it did so in the strictly military journals. It is possible, indeed probable, that the political nature of his campaign was inevitable, since he was already quite well known within certain circles in the army as an arrogant, though intelligent, maverick. He had been a thorn in the side of officers virtually from the beginning of his career and had a personality which was haughty and somewhat abrasive. He was regarded, not without good foundation, as a politician as much as military theorist. The reactions in this sphere also conform to the model, in particular with respect to the attitudes toward authority. The extreme distaste for face-to-face discussion, and the resolution of conflict by recourse to higher authority which the model outlines aptly describes the nature of the interaction between de Gaulle and his military superiors.

Hoffmann's model does, I believe, fail to accurately predict the attraction which de Gaulle and his program were to have on individuals of diverse political backgrounds. This ability to attract followers may be more related to the personal qualities of de Gaulle's character and his oratorical abilities. Nevertheless, once having been convinced by de Gaulle of the importance to France of his program, his followers ardently took up the fight, and thereafter acted in a manner consistent with Hoffmann's model.

De Gaulle's arguments did, of course, have weaknesses. He failed to appreciate the full impact that the airplane would have on warfare, adding in an edition published after the war a passage referring to the effects of coordinated bombardment.¹ He thought that the era of great conquests had

¹Tournoux, Pétain and de Gaulle, 78; Horne, To Lose a Battle, 67.

ended, and did not anticipate Germany's ambitions. He also held that the constitution of his army would take six years, a much greater period of time than that required by Germany to make the same strides.² His writings on the subject of mechanization do not bear the same mark of technical precision or detail as those of Guderian.³ This lack of precision as to the actual means of creating the new military structures merited the scorn of his superiors.⁴

The mistrust and suspicion which de Gaulle aroused with his high-flown and idealized treatise in calling for the professional armored force created mistrust of such an aggressive force. The unbreakable connection between the independent tank formations and the professional army upon which de Gaulle insisted was its eventual undoing, and resulted in the campaign having the opposite effect from that which de Gaulle intended. In attacking the nation-in-arms and the High Command he attacked, in the minds of many, the army at large, and alienated many in the process. The clamorous, contentious, and essentially political nature of the campaign hardened resistance to it, and made consideration of its purely military merits nearly impossible. This very likely stalled the progress of the French army toward modernization in the most important years, the mid-1930s, at a time when Germany was making spectacular progress.

²Werth, De Gaulle: A Political Biography, 82-83.

³Horne, To Lose a Battle, 67.

⁴Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 615.

In the case of de Gaulle two judgements are possible. One could conclude from the fact that he was not sacked that his actions did not exceed the bounds of the conduct expected of the French officer of the period. One could also conclude, however, that his conduct represented an exercise outside the bounds of propriety which damaged the prospects for the adoption of his program by alienating the military hierarchy and politicizing the process. I regard the latter view as closest to the truth.

De Gaulle's political ideas had been changed somewhat in the process of the fight for his army, since he had found sympathizers on the Left as well as the Right. This was an experience which served to broaden his political horizons and was to form part of the foundation for his later political outlook.⁵ De Gaulle's biographer, Brian Crozier, states that, "Disillusioning though Colonel de Gaulle's contacts with the politicians were, it was during this phase that he acquired a lifelong taste for politics as well as a contempt for those who practised them."⁶

De Gaulle was, in the end, able to put his doctrines to the test in some small measure. He was put in command of a brigade of tanks in the Lorraine, at Metz, the 507th, in 1939, and while there he saw his worst fears realized as Germany swept through Poland. In the battle of France in May, 1940, de Gaulle commanded the Fourth French Armored Division, a hastily assembled organization which only existed on paper as de Gaulle assumed command. De Gaulle's letters from the period show that he too was

⁵Ledwidge, De Gaulle, 45.

⁶B. Crozier, De Gaulle, 75.

frustrated by the many practical problems which were implicit in his program of mechanization and which confronted those called upon to implement it. Such problems were systematically ignored or underplayed during the course of the contentious and political campaign of de Gaulle and Reynaud.⁷ The Fourth Armored Division did, however, give a good account of itself, and its commander of himself, in the actions in and around Laon. De Gaulle could not, however, change the course of events through his personal efforts as commander.

⁷Bond and Alexander, "Liddell-Hart and de Gaulle," 619.

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